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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for planning a study trip to New York for students of Shorter College (Georgia) are presented in this program description as an aid to persons who are responsible for planning such a trip. The guidelines are based on the author's previous experience in planning two trips to London and eight trips to New York. Information is provided on who participates, when the trip is scheduled to occur, and why the program was begun. Steps involved in planning include: (1) determining dates; (2) making arrangements for transportation, accommodations, and activities; (3) setting due dates for deposits and final payments; (4) creating a brochure which provides specific information on the trip; and (5) publicizing the trip on campus and in the community. Eleven activities which have been included in past trips to New York are listed. (DC)

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FROM BROADWAY TO BATTERY PARK: FOR COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

For the past ten years, I have planned and hosted study trips for students at Shorter College in Rome, Georgia, during Spring Holidays. The first two of these were taken to London and were planned by two instructors who were totally inexperienced in student travel, and one travel agent who had been in business for only a short time and was also inexperienced in group travel and/or educational trips for students. Through hard work and good luck, these trips were quite successful.

In 1976, because of increased costs, it was decided to work with The Field Studies Center of New York in designing a study trip to New York City instead of London. These have proven so successful that they have continued, making a total of eight consecutive trips, with plans now being made for the ninth one.

As my colleague and I found ourselves in London on that first trip in 1974, with twenty-one enthusiastic participants, we looked at each other and said, "How did we do this?"

Ten years and ten trips later, the word "inexperienced" would hardly apply. The purpose of this paper, then, is to try to answer for those who might need some help, the question we asked: "How did we do this?"

WHO PARTICIPATES? The trip was initially designed for Shorter College students, with the invitation to join the group being given also to families of students, faculty, alumni, and townspeople. This has remained the same since the trips began in 1976.

WHEN DOES THE TRIP OCCUR? The trip is conducted during Shorter College's Spring Holidays in late March and, for the first three years, was a week-long trip. For the past five years, the length has been five days and four nights.

WHY WAS THIS BEGUN? The purpose is to provide educational experiences for students and others who participate. Over 90% of Shorter's student body are from Georgia. Most who take the trip have not had the opportunity to travel to New York City. Students who desire it may earn one semester hour credit for this trip, upon completion of an individually designed and approved project.

The benefits of attending Broadway plays, talking with professionals in their chosen fields of Communications and/or Theatre, sightseeing, visiting museums, attending concerts, and observing different kinds of people and lifestyles are obvious. But more than those benefits, a trip of this kind provides emotional fulfillment in innumerable ways; seeing original works of art that had been seen previously only in

books; being moved by a theatrical or musical performance not before available to them; realizing that even if they choose to live in their hometown after graduation, they do so with the knowledge that it is a conscious choice made after having been exposed to other people and places.

Another answer to the question of WHY has probably become evident by now--and that is the vicarious thrill every time in seeing students experience the city for the first time.

HOW IS THE PLANNING DONE? The first step is to determine the dates of the trip. Then a call to the Field Studies Center initiates the first planning stages. Lloyd and Barbara Meeker, and the Field Studies Center staff will then give assistance in planning specific features, make recommendations about plays, tours of special interest, seminar leaders and/or topics, and any other events pertinent to the needs of the group. They will assist with travel arrangements if requested. They also offer tips and advice on such things as cab fares from the airport, sightseeing bus tours of the city, the weather, clothing needed for the time of year, popular restaurants, and almost every other aspect of planning. When the arrangements are made for the features of the trip in New York, then the planning for travel arrangements through a local travel agent begins.

For each of the eight trips, the Shorter College group has flown from Atlanta to New York. Upon arrival at LaGuardia Airport, transportation to the hotel may be by cabs, a limousine, or a chartered bus. Unless the group exceeds 20, cabs seem to be just as convenient and more economical.

When arranging for air travel, it is necessary to reserve seats as far in advance as possible. This is usually done at least four or five months prior to the time of the trip, with reservations made for a few more than may actually be needed. It is easier to cancel a few reservations than to get additional ones when the plane is full. At some point, usually within 30 days prior to the trip, definite names and numbers must be given and unused seats must be released. The travel agent can give specific information on this requirement.

The travel agent is usually helpful in ordering information from the New York Tourist Bureau, and in assembling a packet of material to be given to each participant at a meeting of all participants about two weeks prior to departure.

During this phase of planning, decisions must be made concerning the pricing of the trip, deposit and final payment date, and brochure design and preparation.

The total cost of the trip is determined by adding the cost of the New York arrangements, the cost of transportation, and the addition of whatever sums are necessary to cover tips,

airport to hotel transportation, room supplements, and any other expenses that might be incurred.

The deposit date is usually set six to eight weeks prior to the trip, with final payment being due one month prior to the trip. The nonrefundable deposit amount will be determined by that needed by The Field Studies Center to secure reservations, theatre tickets, and other arrangements, plus whatever other amount might be deemed necessary by the instructor.

The brochure will give specific information concerning dates, cost, features, transportation, and other necessary facts. In addition, it is usually helpful to suggest other activities which might be enjoyed, have a reservation form to clip and return, a Responsibility Clause, and notice that the cost is subject to change should it become necessary due to increased transportation rates.

When these plans have been made, it is time to begin publicizing the trip on the college campus and in the community.

Publicity is given the trip in a variety of ways. As just mentioned, the brochures are printed, usually by the college printing office, and are distributed on campus in locations where students and faculty are likely to see them--the student center, snack bar, faculty lounge, library, on bulletin boards, and wherever there might be a tabletop in a public area. They are also placed in other public areas such as the local city library, in local banks and in the travel agency.

On campus, posters announcing the trip are placed on bulletin boards, xeroxed notices are placed in student's mailboxes, announcements are made in some classes, and an announcement of the trip is included in the Alumni Bulletin. With some luck, the local city newspaper will carry a story about the trip if it is released by the college publicity office.

The travel agency is usually willing to promote the trip in some of its local newspaper advertising. In most cases, two newspaper advertisements for each trip have been paid for by the travel agency. Additional advertising has been done occasionally.

Two sources of free advertising which have been used are radio and television interviews with the instructor for local radio and cable television. This provides a public service which is beneficial to the stations as well as to those planning and publicizing the trip.

The most effective publicity is probably word-of-mouth. Every year, there are those who have been with the group previously, for whom once doesn't seem to be enough, and most

will recruit a friend for the next year. Some have made the trip as many as three times. Hardly a week goes by without someone inquiring about the trip and indicating a desire to participate.

WHAT ARE THE ACTIVITIES? Various itineraries over the past eight years have included:

Theatre Seminars with Bob LaPone (A Chorus Line), Reid Shelton (Annie), Patricia Elliott (The Elephant Man), the Stage Manager from The Gin Game, Lewis Markin (Children of a Lesser God), Mary Fickett (All My Children), Vondie-Curtis-Hall (DreamGirls), and Tim Scott (CATS).

Communications Seminars with the casting director for Today, Tonight, and Saturday Night Live.

Advertising Seminars with personnel from McCann-Erickson, J. Walter Thompson, and Pierre Cardin.

Guided Tours of the Metropolitan Opera, Lincoln Center, Radio City Music Hall, United Press International, Precision Film Laboratory, The New York Times, The New York Stock Exchange, NBC Studios, and a walking tour of Greenwich Village.

Backstage Tours of theatres, and Backstage at the Waldorf (a tour of their banquet kitchens and lunch in Peacock Alley).

Visits to Museums: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and others.

Attendance at religious services including St. Patrick's Cathedral, St. John The Divine, Marble Collegiate Church, and others.

Attendance at ballet, opera, theatrical, and musical events at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and others.

Tickets to Television Shows: Not For Women Only, The Dick Cavett Show, $20,000 Pyramid, The David Letterman Show.

Theatre: Students usually will see four to six plays in the five day period. Two tickets are usually included in the package, but trip participants use the half-price TKTS office at Times Square with great regularity.

Sightseeing: Half-day or whole-day bus tours are available for those who wish them. Most prefer to form small groups and do their sightseeing on their own, using public transportation or walking.

While this paper cannot provide answers to all the questions, this has been an attempt to suggest some guidelines for organizing and conducting a study trip to New York City. Each group will have special needs and problems, but it is hoped that perhaps some of the suggestions offered here will be helpful.